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ABSTRACT

The Research in Teacher Education (RITE) study is currently examining in depth two selected state-mandated induction programs for beginning teachers. The sample includes 16 first year teachers (along with the teachers, administrators, and other educators selected to work with them) situated in 13 schools in 4 districts in 2 states. Data were collected through: (1) school and district situations surveys; (2) public documents; (3) personal interviews; (4) journals kept by participants; and (5) observations of related events such as workshops and training sessions. A description of the RITE study is presented and the intent and content of the two legislative mandates are noted. The state department of education rules and regulations are reviewed. Preliminary findings indicate that resources, accountability, and vulnerability are concerns that are present at the local level. Tentative conclusions are suggested. (JD)

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LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION OF
TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAMS

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Gary A. Griffin, Program Director

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LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION OF TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAMS

Introduction

In the wake of national concern regarding the qualifications of teachers, an increasing number of state legislatures are mandating programs through which all new teachers must pass successfully before they receive state certification; state departments of education are formulating rules and regulations for the implementation of the mandates; local districts are developing means for enforcing requirements; and individual schools are gearing up for compliance. How to deal with the issues surrounding the first years of teaching is both a policy and practice question of much concern at every level.

The purpose of this paper is to present some preliminary findings from an in-progress study (Griffin, Barnes, Defino, Edwards, Hoffman, Hukill, & O'Neal, 1983) of legislatively mandated teacher induction programs in two states by the Research in Teacher Education (RITE) program at the Research and Development for Teacher Education. Final conclusions must, of course, await completion of data collection and analysis but effects and issues are evident in preliminary findings, and certain trends may justifiably be extrapolated. The present paper focuses on local implementation and on the identification of emerging issues. A description of the RITE study is presented, the intent and content of the two legislative mandates are noted, the state department rules and regulations are reviewed, findings regarding implementation at the local level are discussed, issues identified, and, finally, some tentative conclusions are suggested.

The RITE Study

Presently there exists a variety of approaches to policy and practice regarding how new teachers are to be assessed and/or assisted. But in every case policy made at the state level is intended for translation into practice at system, school, and classroom levels of activity. It is important, therefore, to understand the phenomenon of policy to practice in regard to the induction of beginning teachers. The RITE study is an inquiry into several levels of decision making and action in regard to first year teachers who are participating in a state mandated process of induction. The intent of the inquiry is to provide a knowledge base about induction as a policy into practice phenomenon. The overarching goal is to understand how the induction programs affect the transition from student of teaching to teacher. Two selected state mandated induction programs are being examined in depth through the RITE study in order to better understand their intentions, implementation processes, and effects. The two states selected represent predominant trends in induction programs across the country. Local sites were selected on the basis of nominations for reputationally effective districts, and schools within these districts were selected on the basis of their reputation for success.

The sample includes 16 first year teachers (along with the teachers, administrators, and other educators specifically assigned to work with them in the induction program) situated in 13 schools in four district in two states. Figure 1 illustrates these relationships.

Both qualitative and quantitative data are being collected. Six instruments are being used in the collection of quantitative data: 1) an Empathy Construct Rating Scale, adapted by the RITE staff from the original by LaMonica (1980); 2) Teacher Work-Life Inventory (Blumberg & Kleinke,

1981); 3) Conceptual Level Paragraph Completion Test (Harvey, Hunt, & Schroder, 1961); 4) the Stages of Concern (SoC) questionnaire (Hall, George, & Rutherford, 1977); 5) Levels of Use focused interview (Loucks, Newlove, & Hall, 1975); and, 6) the Barnes Teacher Observation Instrument (Griffin, Barnes, O'Neal, Edwards, Defino, & Hukill, 1983). Qualitative data collection procedures include: 1) School and District Situations Surveys; 2) public documents; 3) personal interviews; 4) journals kept by participants; and, 5) observations by RITE staff of related events such as workshops and training sessions. Data collection for the study began in August of 1983, and is scheduled for completion in June of 1984.

The present paper is based on data available at this time. The final report on the project which will be prepared by the RITE staff will include all data collected and will of course be a much more definitive statement. That report is scheduled for publication in February of 1985.

Data available for use in preparing the present paper include: 1) the Stages of Concern (SoC) questionnaires administered at the beginning of the school year to participants, 2) public documents, including legislation, state department regulations, district and school printed materials, 3) observations by RITE staff of related events such as workshops and training sessions in which participants were involved, 4) early journal entries kept by participants, 5) initial interviews conducted by RITE staff with participants, and, 6) classroom observations by RITE staff.

Legislation

The induction program in State #1 is mandated by one component of a more comprehensive House Bill passed in 1980. This component requires teachers who graduate after January 31, 1982, to participate in an induction program of assistance during their initial year of teaching in order to

ST.	District	School	New Teacher	Peer Teacher	Administrator	Other Educator
STATE #1	1	1	1	2	3	4
			1	2	3	4
		2	1	2	3	4
			1	2	3	4
	2	1	1	2	3	4
		2	1	2	3	4
		3	1	2	3	4
		4	1	2	3	4
STATE #2	1	1	1	2	3	4
		2	1	2	3	4
		3	1	2	3	4
		4	1	2	3	4
	2	1	1	2	3	4
			1	2	3	4
		2	1	2	3	4
			1	2	3	4

Figure 1. RITE Study Sample

qualify for a state teaching certificate. The declared intent of the legislation is to establish qualifications of teachers to ensure that the education of the children will be provided by teachers of demonstrated ability. A local committee of three, including an experienced teacher, an administrator, and another educator, is assigned to provide assistance to the new teacher and to determine whether the teacher will be recommended for certification. At the end of the first year the teacher is recommended by this committee for certification or continuation for a second year. When a second year is required an individual staff development plan is provided. At the end of the second year the teacher is recommended for either certification or non-certification.

The induction program in State #2 is mandated through a Senate Bill approved in 1981 which provided for a beginning teacher program. The purpose of this program is to: (a) increase student learning by providing a set of supervised support services for teachers in the first year(s) of teaching in the state to assist them in their continuing professional development, and (b) meet the requirements of state statute and administrative code. Each school district is required to submit a beginning teacher program to the Commissioner of Education for approval. The beginning teacher activities must be based on classroom application of certain specified competencies. Successful completion of the program is required for the superintendent or chief administrator to recommend the teacher for a full certificate.

Regulations

The rules and regulations in both states are provided by the state department of education. In State #1 the department developed a standard plan of implementation that is used statewide. In State #2 the department

defined the implementation program and specified its components but required each school district to develop its own specific plan and submit that plan to the board for approval. Programs in both states provide for a committee which has the dual responsibilities of assisting and assessing the beginning teacher. Committee members in both states must make classroom observations of the teacher and participate in committee meetings with the teacher.

State #1 department of education provides the substance and the procedures for implementation of the induction program, including time lines and reporting forms, although there is some allowance for local adaptation. Provision is made for the assistance/assessment committee to be named and to work with the new teacher. The committee includes an experienced teacher, a building level administrator and another educator from an institution of higher education. This committee has the responsibility to observe the new teacher in the classroom and to meet with the new teacher to offer assistance. An observation instrument focusing on four "categories": 1) human relations, 2) teaching and assessment, 3) classroom management, and 4) professionalism, is used. Indicators under these categories are similar to the competencies identified in the program in State #2. This committee also makes the recommendation regarding certification of the new teacher. The recommendation is based on criteria established by the state board and is determined by majority vote of the committee.

A State Board Rule in State #2 effective July 1, 1982, circumscribes the Beginning Teacher Program, defining it as a "formal" program of at least one year. Each school district was required to submit a plan for approval by May 1, 1982. This plan must include provision for supervised support services for the continuing development and demonstration of specified competencies by the new teacher. The beginning teacher support staff must

include a peer teacher, a building level administrator and one other professional educator. A professional development plan must be provided which includes criteria by which successful performance will be assessed. At least three formative conferences are required, each conference based on at least one observation by a support staff member, using a set of common criteria.

A "summative" evaluation plan must be provided which includes observation instruments and evaluation procedures to demonstrate successful performance of the minimum essential competencies. At least two summative evaluations are required, one within ninety working days of the beginning of employment in order to provide assistance where observations suggest it is needed.

The program provides the beginning teachers with an opportunity to demonstrate the minimum essential competencies specified in state statutes and state board rule. Twenty-four general or "generic" competencies are identified as "essential," and it is the responsibility of the support committee assigned to the new teacher to assure that the teacher recommended for certification has demonstrated these competencies. Instruments including indicators and frequencies are used by the committee in observing the new teacher and as objective verification.

Tentative Findings

In the two states selected for the RITE study, programs of teacher induction are in place. Legislation has been passed, rules and regulations have been instituted, and procedures for implementation developed. Districts and schools are in compliance and individuals in conformity.

Degree and effect of impact differ situationally but the reality of impact is consistent and absolute. In both states, law provides impetus and

departmental regulation promotes uniformity. Participants develop a common vocabulary and concomitantly, a common perspective. All of the participants in the study act, do something, move, according to parameters specified by the programs. There are differences in degree and effect. One extreme is represented by the case of the new teacher who was evaluated by the support committee as evincing significant skill and knowledge deficiency. Data on the members of this committee indicate that they are unusually well qualified, possess a thorough knowledge of the induction program, share a philosophical and personal commitment to the program, have a high level of mutual respect and appreciation, and work well together. In addition, the principal at the school is remarkably knowledgeable with regard to the induction program and unusually adept at incorporating it into the ongoing program of the school. The principal, the committee members, and the new teacher in this situation shared a recognition of the problem from the outset and have made and maintained a strong commitment to make full use of the induction program and its resources. They have performed far beyond the requirements of the program. RITE data to this point indicate that one result has been marked and significant change in the classroom behavior of the new teacher in the direction of increased frequency of the behaviors listed by the program as desired.

At the other extreme is the situation in which neither the new teacher nor members of the support team appear to be knowledgeable about the induction program nor desirous of increasing their knowledge about it. They report compliance to the degree that required paper work is submitted but they express indifference, irritation, and disdain. There is more fragmentation than cooperation among committee members and physical coordination of arranging mutually agreeable times for meetings and/or

observations appears to be of greater concern than substantive issues. Data collected by RITE indicate that this new teacher could benefit from quality direction but neither the new teacher nor members of the team express any concern along this line.

Data indicate that the tension between program requirements and situational realities is exacerbated by the deviation of situational realities from situational intent. For example, the intent of the local school is to employ a teacher prior to the opening of school in order for that teacher to have time and resources necessary to prepare for the opening. It is the intent of the local school to have the teacher hired for a specific position remain in that position for the term of the contract year. It is also the intent of the local school to place a teacher in an assignment for which that teacher is qualified. The induction program in both states assumes these intents as realities. When a teacher is not hired for a position until the second or third week of school, when the teacher is moved from one assignment to another, or when the teacher is misassigned, the format of the induction program is strained with the necessary adaptation.

When the program calls for specifically qualified committee members and there are no individuals available who meet the requirements, the intent of the program is strained in the acceptance of individuals who are available but do not have the qualifications called for.

The following preliminary findings in regard to local implementation emerged from data collected on the progress of sixteen new teachers, eight in each state, four in each of two districts, through their respective programs.

First: the program has made an impact at the local level. Regardless of the degree to which the individual understands, agrees with, or seeks to circumvent the program, each and every person involved is aware of the program and is attending the situation which the program addresses, i.e., the induction of new teachers into the school system. Every new teacher has been observed, has participated in meetings with an assigned committee, and has received feedback based on program specified criteria.

Second: there is wide variation in the interactive relationships developing in each of the sixteen situations. In some cases the administrator functions as leader, initiating and directing activities; in a limited number of cases it is the experienced teacher or the other educator who takes the lead. The perceptions of each individual's ability and qualifications vary as does the weight granted to the individual's opinions and contributions. In some cases data indicate that little occurs beyond perfunctory compliance with physical requirements, i.e., attendance at meetings, presence in classroom and paperwork turned in. In other situations the team appears to function as a competent and highly motivated unit in providing support and guidance for the first year teacher.

Third: data collected to this point suggest that every one of the new teachers will be recommended for certification. Concern has been expressed in some cases with regard to the qualifications of the new teacher but concern has also been expressed as to whether it is a failure on the part of the support team if deficiencies are not corrected. Presently available data indicate that successful completion of the program with concomitant certification is assumed by all participants. There appears to be no concern or fear of a challenge or even of questioning with regard to a positive recommendation. The predominant perception of the program at the

local level is that its purpose is assessment, (i.e., the support committee is to assure that the new teacher demonstrates the requisite behaviors and is to apprise the state department of this demonstration). The data suggest, however, that a shift occurs in participant perception regarding the purpose of the program when the focus changes from general to specific. The general purpose of the program as a whole is perceived as assessment, making sure that inadequate teachers are excluded from the system. But in every specific case the purpose is verbalized as assistance, helping that individual new teacher to improve, become better, adjust to the situation. The view appears to be: 'The program is a gate-keeper for the profession, assessing performance to eliminate those who do not measure up; but in my case, the new teacher is being assisted and will, unquestionably, be successful in the program.'

Fourth: there is considerable difference of opinion expressed among participants as to the value of the program. This difference appears in both states. Some individuals feel that the program is redundant while others feel that it is an excellent move toward improving education. Participants at the local school level generally indicated limited knowledge of the program and tended to perceive its value in terms of its impact on their specific situations.

Fifth: there is a dynamic tension between program fidelity and requisite situational adaptation. The feeling at the local level appears to be: "when you can't do what you must do, you must do what you can do." Some participants expressed frustration at being caught between requirements and expectations of the program and limitations of the situation. For example, in one situation scheduling makes it almost impossible for the new teacher and the peer teacher to see each other; a long term illness in

another situation has the same result. This tension seems to be more related to procedural compliance than to substantive compliance. That is, the concerns expressed have to do with making required meetings and observations, and getting paper work done on schedule and in the right format. No one expressed problems with the intent to provide support and assistance to the new teacher.

Sixth: finally, some concern has been expressed about the validity and reliability of the observational data upon which recommendations with regard to certification are based. Some individuals fear that recommendations so based could not survive a legal challenge.

These preliminary findings from the in-progress RITE study indicate issues and concerns that are present at the local level. The extent to which these issues permeate and influence the implementation of the induction programs can be attended to only when data collection is completed.

Issues

Findings from data available at this point clearly evince the emergence at the local level of certain concerns or issues: resources, accountability, and vulnerability. In terms of resources, time is most frequently mentioned: time required to observe, time required to meet, and time required to coordinate schedules so that meetings could take place, time required to read the materials sent out, time to attend workshops or training sessions, and time to do required paperwork. Most of the participants indicated that they considered the time required by the program to be significant. The need for more training, personnel, and material resources was less frequently mentioned but appeared to be a concern.

inclined to accept without question the judgments of the observers; the more secure or aggressive new teacher to challenge them.

Conclusions

A state mandate for a teacher induction program will focus attention on program requirements, and state department rules and regulations will direct activities at the local level toward these ends. The less provision is made for situational contingencies the more likely the local focus will be on procedural rather than substantive compliance. The more distant are evaluation criteria from verifiable correlation the less likely are evaluators to risk challenge.

Both state programs being studied by RITE provide for continuing program evaluation and improvement. Perhaps the major conclusion to be drawn at this point is that resources and personnel can be marshalled through state mandate and regulation to focus on the problems associated with induction to provide a program responsive to realities of local implementation in a move toward the general improvement of education.

The intent to do what is required, to know and to carry out assigned responsibility is expressed by participants. Some of them indicate that they intend to do what is literally demanded and others indicate an intent to follow the spirit as well as the letter of the requirements. In either case the question of accountability is raised. Some participants feel they are accountable only for fulfilling the stated requirements. Other participants express a feeling of accountability for the success of the new teacher, assuming a sense of responsibility for the behavior of the new teacher as well as for their own behavior. Some new teachers seem to feel it is their own responsibility to "make it" while others feel the support persons should tell them what to do.

The issue of vulnerability appears in the concern over situational factors which militate against the participants being able to carry out requirements. For example, a peer teacher reported that scheduling conflicts made it almost impossible to meet with the new teacher in order to provide the required assistance. Also, a professor reported difficulty making the required classroom observation because an unscheduled school assembly took the new teacher and her students out of class during the time arranged for the observation. This issue is also raised in connection with observation criteria and observers' judgments. Participants express concern with regard to the defensibility of a negative recommendation, and indicate that if the slightest question or doubt exists, a positive recommendation will be given. "Nobody," one participant remarked off the record, "will challenge a positive recommendation." For new teachers the sense of vulnerability appears to be more related to personal insecurity than to objectively determined competency level. The insecure new teacher is more

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